Status of underground mining

*527. SHRI SURESH PACHOURI : Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state :

(a) the present status of underground mining in India; and

(b) the steps taken by Government to increase underground mining in the country ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI SYED SHAHNAWAZ HUSSAIN) : (a) Producing subsidiary companies of Coal India Limited (CIL) and Singareni Collieries Company Ltd. (SCCL) together produced 64.4 million tonnes of coal from Underground mines in 2000-2001 which constitutes about 21.6% of total coal produced in these two companies. Coal production by CIL is spread in various States *viz.* Orissa, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh and Assam/Meghalaya. Coal production by SCCL is confined in the State of Andhra Pradesh only.

As on 1-4-2001, there are 306 underground mines in CIL and 56 underground mines in SCCL. During 2000-01, coal production from underground mines in CIL was 50.59 million tonnes which is about 19% of its total coal production. In SCCL, during the same period, production from underground mines was 13.78 million tonnes which constitutes about 45% of its total coal production.

(b) Various steps taken to increase production from underground mines in CILand SCCL include :

(i) Introduction of Mass Production Technologies.

(ii) Increased adoption of Intermediate technology using Side Discharge Loaders (SDLs) and Load Haul Dumpers (LHDs).

(iii) Introduction of Blasting Gallery Method for thick seams.

(iv) Introduction of modern mine management practices to make underground operations more profitable and competitive.

(v) Effective spare management system for mechanised mining operations.

Bottlenecks in tourist travel to India

*528. SHRI S. RAMACHANDRAN PILLAI : Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to State :

(a) whether it is a fact that for the foreign tourists, India is considered a high cost destination;

(b) whether the Home Minister has called for the removal of all bottlenecks in the way of travel and tourism so as to boost the tourism industry; and

(c) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR) : (a) Yes, Sir. There is a perception that India is a comparatively costly destination.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) As a part of its on-going activities of promoting tourism to the country, and removing the bottlenecks, Ministry of Tourism is coordinating with other Departments who provide tourism services. In this context, Minister of Tourism and Culture has held many meetings with other Ministers, including Minister of Home Affairs, to discuss ways and means for removal of bottlenecks and tourism development and growth. New initiatives on facilitation, like visa on arrival, on information dissemination and interministerial coordinated have been mooted.

Medieval period temples in Gujarat

*529. DR. C. NARAYANA REDDY : Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that in the recent excavations in Umta Village near Vadnagar in North Gujarat a medieval (11th to 13th centuries) Hindu Jain Temple with its broad features intact, has been unearthed;

(b) whether the Archaeological Survey of India has been associated with this important operation; and

(c) if not, whether Government would ensure that A.S.I. takes charge of further excavations and also of the unearthed items reportedly kept in local panchayat building ?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Since the Gujarat State Department of Archaeology has excavated the site and the unearthed items are already in the custody of the State Government. The department have no proposal appropriate to intervene in the matter at this stage.